

Durham Newton Hall Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114134
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	357484
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Carole Snee

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Barron
Headteacher	Mrs J Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Fourteen lessons were observed, and six teachers seen. Inspectors talked to school staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, planning, improvement plans, pupils' reports and governing body documentation. The inspectors also scrutinised the work of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and of older pupils, and took into account the responses made by 84 parents to the inspection questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether the quality of teaching challenges all pupils appropriately.
- Whether monitoring and evaluation are of consistently good quality across all subjects.
- To see if the quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in the outdoor learning, is strong enough to give all children a really good start to their learning in school.
- Whether the governors know the school well enough to challenge it effectively.

Information about the school

Newton Hall is broadly the same size as other infant schools nationally. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities are below the national average. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are of White British heritage; the others belong to a range of minority ethnic groups. There are few pupils who are learning English as an additional language.

The school holds the Basic Skills Award, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Quality Mark and has Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Newton Hall Infants is a good school. Outstanding relationships with parents and carers, combined with excellent attendance, mean that the overwhelming majority of pupils are very well supported in all aspects of their learning. The school's very clear focus on pupils' personal development results in them behaving well and saying that they feel safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and improving.

Learning and progress are good across the school for most groups of pupils. Despite achieving well and making good progress overall, a very small minority of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make only satisfactory progress in mathematics and reading. All groups of pupils make at least good progress in writing. This is a real strength of the school and leads to high attainment in this subject. Overall, pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 2, their overall attainment is consistently above average. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers usually take great care to plan interesting lessons. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, however, opportunities are sometimes missed to provide activities that really engage children in exciting learning, especially outdoors and for the more able. Older pupils are often actively involved in their learning. For example, some surveyed the eye colour of all pupils in the school while others made shortbread from their own instructions. Assessment is generally used well to plan work which provides appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities. However, the high-quality support and well-matched tasks provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to promote their writing are not as evident in reading and mathematics lessons.

The school is well led by the headteacher, who is determined that it provides a first-class education for the pupils. She is a reflective practitioner, who uses strong evaluation systems to inform the school's clearly focused improvement plans. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly involved in leading improvements in their subjects, particularly literacy, but this is not yet evident in all subjects because they do not all analyse data with sufficient rigour.

Parents and carers greatly appreciate the school's commitment to involving them in their children's education. Very good use is made of the strong partnerships with other schools. These, such as the high-quality support for physical education from the secondary school sports coordinator, enhance and enrich the curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made positive advances in its already good quality. Combined with accurate and rigorous self-evaluation, this indicates the school's good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in reading and mathematics for a small minority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by extending the high-quality support strategies used to promote pupils' writing to these subjects.
- Further extend the leadership skills of middle leaders, by requiring them to analyse all available data rigorously, and using the information gained to match provision more precisely to pupils' needs in all subjects.
- Improve the quality of outdoor learning for Reception children, by:
 - providing exciting activities, which have a clear focus on specific learning and that entice children to become more involved
 - using adult support more effectively in order to extend children's play and to provide more challenge for all children, especially those who are more able.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is above average. Their progress is good because lessons have a positive impact on their learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to produce their best work. They listen attentively and enjoy taking part in practical activities. They respond very well to teachers' questions and listen to the contributions of others with respect. The school's award of the Information and Communication Technology Quality Mark reflects pupils' adept use of new technology to support their learning.

All major groups of pupils achieve well and enjoy learning. There are no particular differences between the progress of boys and girls. The more-able pupils are challenged and supported very well to attain the higher levels by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well overall, by an effective mix of carefully targeted support. There are times, however, when a small minority of these pupils make slower progress in reading and mathematics, than in other subjects.

Pupils' good personal development means that they are ready to take on additional responsibilities, such as giving out and collecting the registers. They feel very safe in school, understand well the benefits of sensible eating and regular exercise, and they are well prepared for the move to junior school. Even the youngest children think about their personal safety, for example, when they build a bridge, considering how they can make it safe enough for them to balance on. Pupils' involvement with schools in Italy and Germany, and the new connections they are making with a school in New York, enable them to have some excellent opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of how children similar to themselves have different experiences in their lives. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their positive attitudes towards school, each other and the world in general. Their outstanding attendance shows how much they enjoy coming to school.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is of consistently good quality. At its best, learning is planned systematically to include interesting and challenging tasks that engage the pupils, who consequently work at a brisk pace and make good progress. Teachers and their assistants motivate pupils well by identifying and praising their achievements. In the best lessons, pupils are given clear information on how to improve their work. Assessment is usually used well to inform planning, so that all groups of pupils are challenged to achieve their best. There are times, however, when the tasks given do not fully match the abilities of different groups, and assessment opportunities are not methodically built into lessons. On these few occasions, pupils' progress is not as swift as it might be.

The effective curriculum has been carefully tailored to provide pupils with a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. Opportunities for pupils to use and apply their basic skills of literacy and numeracy are woven skilfully throughout. Imaginative use is made of links between subjects, for example, in a very good lesson pupils used art, information and communication technology and mathematics to produce pumpkin pictures for Halloween. The number of after-school activities is impressive for an infant school, and greatly enrich what the school offers.

Care, guidance and support are good. Adults work hard to foster good relationships with all pupils. There are no exclusions and the school has effective links with outside agencies, particularly for increasing expertise in managing the very few pupils who exhibit

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challenging behaviour. Support for transition to the junior school is strong and by the time pupils move on to that school, they are familiar with both the building and the staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The committed and conscientious headteacher works closely with the governing body, which is knowledgeable and supportive. Its expertise in budget matters has been of considerable support to the school, although members do not always take up opportunities to become as involved in the academic side of school life. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well, and holds the school to good account for all matters regarding the safeguarding of the pupils. Procedures to vet adults who work with pupils, and training for the staff in child protection and safeguarding are up to date and follow best practice. However, for some pupils, the lack of organised activities for play at break times means that more time is spent running around, with consequent bumps and scrapes.

Leaders and managers at all levels have the necessary ambition and drive to continue to improve the school. However, as yet, not all subject leaders monitor and evaluate their subjects closely enough to inform precise strategies for improvement. The school's engagement with parents and carers is a huge strength of the school. Staff regularly consult and encourage them to play a full part in their children's learning and personal development. Discrimination is not tolerated and the very good promotion of equal opportunities means that the very great majority of pupils make good progress, including those who are learning English as an additional language. The school has developed very productive partnerships with other organisations and schools that enhance provision for pupils considered vulnerable and enrich the curriculum. Community cohesion is promoted well because the school has made strong links with its local community, and also globally. It has plans to further improve links with schools in other areas of the United Kingdom that have a very different cultural make-up.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's confidence grows enormously as soon as they enter school, because the support and care for them are so good. Consistently good teaching enables children to progress well and to be effectively prepared for their work in Key Stage 1.

Children acquire well the skills they need for the future. These are developed through the consistent use of routines, across both classes. Children are given responsibility for small tasks and allowed to initiate their own activities, which fosters their ability to make appropriate decisions and choices. The use made of the outdoor environment is improving. However, outdoor activities are not always planned with a clear focus on learning, and staff do not entice children as well as they could into exciting activities that promote and extend their knowledge and skills. There is also insufficient space for children to have access to some of the activities which promote their physical development, such as building large constructions or using wheeled toys. Children demonstrate how to stay safe and healthy through their considerate behaviour towards each other.

The good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has taken opportunities to refine and enhance practice further. Assessment is used effectively throughout by all staff, who monitor and record children's progress well. Staff usually use this information well to match activities to the needs of individual children particularly those carried out indoors. The excellent relationships with parents and carers contribute significantly to the strong transition arrangements.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of this school, and really appreciate the lengths to which staff go to help and support their children's learning. They are particularly appreciative of the school's 'open door' policy – the ease of access to their children's teachers on the yard every morning and afternoon, the swift response to any concerns and the comprehensive reports on their children's learning. Typical comments included, 'This is an excellent school', 'a very caring and supportive learning environment', 'my child has been encouraged and nurtured to excel.' A very few parents asked for more information about the strategies the school uses to teach initial sounds, so they could help their children more effectively at home. Inspectors endorse the potential usefulness of this practice. Inspectors found much evidence to support all of these very positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Durham Newton Hall Infants' School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 166 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	74	22	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	70	25	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	49	41	49	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	49	40	48	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	51	61	31	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	46	38	45	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	51	38	45	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	49	31	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	55	38	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	42	38	45	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	43	34	40	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	56	33	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	74	20	24	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Durham Newton Hall Infants' School, Durham, DH1 5LP

The other inspectors and I very much enjoyed our recent visit to your school. You made us feel very welcome and we loved seeing all the work you were doing – learning about the number nine, singing beautifully and doing some very interesting work on surveying eye colours throughout the school. Thank you so much for chatting with us, giving us your views about the school and helping us to see what a good time you all have.

You go to a good school, where the teachers and all the staff look after you very well, where they work very closely with your parents or carers to help you learn, and where you make good progress – especially in your writing. This is because you have good teachers.

I have asked the school to become even better by making sure that those of you who find learning a bit more difficult than most, do just as well in your reading and mathematics, as you do in your writing. I have also asked some of those teachers who look after subjects to look carefully at how well you are doing in them, so that they can make sure that you achieve your very best in everything you learn. Finally, I have asked your headteacher and governors to improve the quality of outdoor learning for children the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that the activities out there are really exciting and fun and you learn a lot while you are playing.

You can help by working really hard at your reading and mathematics, and all your other subjects. Your attendance is excellent – that shows you really enjoy coming to school. Keep it up! Well done for all your hard work.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Carole Snee

Lead inspector

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